abian Schaefer.

Schaeffer takes a concrete and logical approach to her topic. In order to find female ancestors, she reasons, it is necessary to know a woman's legal status at that particular point in time and look at "those areas where the female ancestor interacts with the government and the legal system; where law, precedent, and even custom mandate the unequivocal identification of all parties, male and female."

Shaeffer's book focuses on of women across history and point to places and records where family historians can look in order to uncover the identity of our women ancestors.

The French term "femme covert," literally meaning a "covered woman," best explains the status of married women in the past. Since a husband and wife were seen as one person under the law, a married woman's legal rights were suspended during the time of her marriage. A and court records, affidavits, summonses, testimonies, obtaining licenses, receiving public welfare, dower rights, suffrage, and military records. The book covers women of all races and ethnic groups, from slave manumissions, to Asian immigrants, to women under the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

This book is full of interesting material that can lead us to uncloaking the identity of our female ancestors. It is available from the Genealogical Publishing Company for whose given name was Paul Eugene. He was born in Vigo County, Indiana on March 29, 1916, and adopted between 1928 and 1930 by Frank A. and Anna (Ford) Peterson, who were married in 1928. Paul was raised by his adopted parents in De Kalb County, Illinois. It's possible that Paul's mother was still living and believed that he visited her several times after the adoption. Contact Jennifer Cruse, 8620 E. Sunset Ave., Terre Haute, IN, e-mail wvgs@inwvgs.org.

Disasters (WV)

Spring Hill Mine explosion kills eight 60 years ago

Eight miners were killed as the result of an explosion at 2:40 p.m., April 30, 1947, at the Spring Hill Mine, about one-half mile south of Terre Haute.

At the time it was the deadliest mine disaster in Vigo County annals. It was superseded only by the tragedy on March 2, 1961 at Viking Mine, west of the city, which claimed 22 lives.

The explosion occurred at a truck mine while a crew was blasting to create a new air shaft. The eight victims were approximately 2,000 feet from the mine's existing shaft.

The victims were Barney Riggs, Desire Francis Lete Sr., Calvin Wilson, Steve Otto Summers, Fern Earhart, Morton F. Gates, John Donaldson Brown and Chauncey Blackburn. Wilson., a mine boss, Earhart, Summers and Gates were from West Terre Haute. Brown was from Terre Haute and Blackburn was from Liggett.

Three members of the crew – Adam Harmon and Everett Marshall, both of West Terre Haute, and Frank Pangrazio of Clinton – were rescued

Within 20 minutes of the explosion, Griff Morris, director of the Indiana Bureau of Mines and Mining, was at the site directing rescue work initiated by a crew from the Indiana Mine Rescue Station at West Terre Haute.

He was assisted by Williams Gibbons, assistant mine inspector, and Evan Evans, superintendent of the West Terre Haute Rescue Station.

Miners from several nearby working mines, particularly employees at Victory Mine east of the city, arrived to assist. Crews from the U.S. Bureau of Mines station at Vincennes reached the scene at about 6 p.m. A crew from the rescue station at Bicknell got there about an hour later.

Smoke and dust delayed commencement of rescue operations for nearly three hours but, once initiated, rescue squads worked most of the night to extricate the victims.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

MIKE MCCORMICK

Riggs, a truck driver who resided at 1707 Lafayette Ave., was the first victim brought to the surface at 10:15 p.m. The body of Lete, a jerryman from rural Terre Haute, was brought up 15 minutes later.

Smoke and dust continued to escape from the shaft throughout the night. Oxygen apparatus was lowered into the mine to assist the rescue workers.

The Mine Rescue Squad ignored orders to come to the surface for medical examinations shortly after midnight, extracting Earhart and Blackburn from the rubble first.

Ross Wilson, a rescue squad member, was the son of victim Calvin Wilson. Lucien Busiere, another rescuer, was overcome by carbon monoxide gas and had to be resuscitated by the Terre Haute Fire Department.

Though safety regulations generally required that all men but the shot firer leave the mine before the blast, mine owner Harry Kerns of Tri-K Mine said the rule did not apply when 10 or fewer were working and repair work was being done. The three rescued men were waiting at the bottom of the shaft for the blasting crew to fire six shots. Harmon, a mule driver, said the explosion occurred after the second shot.

The blast knocked down Harmon and Marshall, another driver, forcing them to let go of their mules. Noah Lenne, who was at the head of the shaft when the explosion occurred, saw the smoke and dust and promptly notified Darrell Kerns, the mine owner's son, who was working at the mine

Within minutes of the explosion, Indiana State Police and Vigo County Sheriff's deputies blocked off the road to the mine to prevent accidents and to provide access to rescue workers. Within an hour, between 1,500 and 2,000 automobiles were lining roads within a mile of the mine. Ambulances from Terre Haute funeral homes were summoned to the scene and kept alternate watch throughout the night.

Terre Haute police was employed to restrict access and control the crowd. The Terre Haute office of the American Red Cross served coffee and sandwiches to workers and the entombed miners' families.

The bodies of all victims were recovered by 3 a.m. May 1. The following day, plans were initiated to snuff out the intense underground fire by sealing off the shaft. Roy Capps of the U.S. Bureau of Mines Safety Division was placed in charge.

The closing was delayed 24 hours while hearings were conducted.

Nearly 900 coal miners at three area coal mines took an unofficial "memorial holiday" on May 1 "in sympathy" for the eight victims at Spring Hill. As a result, Dresser, Sexton and Blackhawk mines closed, consistent with a custom prevalent in many areas of the country.

Lt. Commander C.E. Poe of Terre Haute, Indiana administrator for the Coal Mines Administration, said that Spring Hill mine, owned by Spring Hall Coal Co., was not being mined for production at the time of the disaster.

Under a special agreement entered into on April 8, 1947 with federal inspectors and District 11 of the Unite Mine Workers of America, a limited number of men were permitted to drive an air shaft and provide "general clean-up work" in anticipation of a mine inspection.

Perry Kerns, the mine owner's brother, was asphyxiated at the mine on March 5, 1947, while setting off a shot.

At hearings conducted at the Indiana Mine Rescue Station at West Terre Haute on Friday, May 2, evidence apparently was persuasive that the underground crew ignited black powder contrary to orders from the owners and state and federal mine safety codes.

Morris urged the adoption of state legislation barring the use of black powder as an explosive in coal mines.

According to Morris, the use of black powder in mines like Spring Hill, where no undercutting of coal is done, was especially dangerous.

Founded in the early Twenties, Spring Hill Mine was about 25 years old in 1947. When fully operational, it produced about 40,000 tons of coal annually from a 4½-foot No. 5 seam and employed 42 men.

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